

What's The Craic? By The Guv'nor @ Tengku Izzudin

Ireland! Always wanted to come here after seeing many photos of Nuddy with 2 netfulls of bream and roach in the 90s when I was studying in the UK. Finally made it after nearly 20 years, and to fish the World Pairs Angling Championship too. I'll be fishing against some of the best match anglers around, including the current World Feeder Champs team members from England, what was I thinking eh?! Having set 2 modest goals of trying not to blank on any of the days and to not finish last in the championship, hope I'll catch a few! Possibly adhering to Malaysia's long fine sporting tradition of not winning anything, I'm here to enjoy the fishing and the craic!



After a really long haul flight from Kuala Lumpur we headed straight to sunny Devon with Steve and Bobbie Lockett where I stayed at their beautiful home for a couple of nights. After trying my best to earn my keep by clearing their shed and tying hooklengths, we went for a warm up session at Town House fishery catching some small roach and a ghostie.



Rented a van, loaded it up with tackle and off to Holyhead to catch the ferry to Dublin. Met Michael Buchwalder on the ferry, and got some good tips from 2013's Drennan Knock Out cup winner.



Travelled quite a few miles already on the van to reach Fenagh, chauffeur driven of course. Taking in all the beautiful countryside and scenery along the way, what an amazing place this is!



Checked in at The Old Rectory, a real nice cosy place in Fenagh. Patrick the owner was there to greet us and showed us around. The Garden Cottage will be my home for the next week. Some good old Irish rain didn't want to miss out in welcoming my arrival.



My home for the World Pairs



Training Day!

Had a practice session at Kiltybarden which was closest to where we were staying. Really needed it to get a feel for the tackle and the setup (I'm borrowing Steve's kit by the way). After figuring out how to put on the chest waders on properly (Steve's waders came up to me ears!), I got my first taste of Irish fishing with some nice small hybrids eager to feed on the feeder.



Kiltybarden. Co.Leitrim all set for the competitors



Met up with my partner, Kevin Locke. Kevin had been busy preparing venues, especially Horse Island, since i had arrived. It was kind of a blind date, I did not have a partner from Malaysia so the organisers paired us together. Kevin is a really experienced match angler (really nice bloke too) and immediately some tips were shared. If you add the both of us together and divide by half, you'd probably get the size of an average angler!!



Second day in Ireland, and we headed off to Enniskillen to look at some venues and the town there, got some decent photos and then popped in at Tackle and Bait to do a bit of shopping and met John Potters , the only angler who has won the Classic twice. He says everyone knows about me now through FB which I thought was quite embarrassing!



Pumphouse practice session!

We drove to Lough Scur @ Pumphouse for a quick fish on the way back. This time I set up just the pole to get a feeling for it, but holding a 13m pole with a side wind is not my idea of a good time! Caught a few on my 5m line loosefeeding casters all the time.



Stopped at The Forge (Steve's favourite shop) to say hello to Gabriel and picked up a few souvenirs. The visiting pleasure angler meets here to find out about the local fishing and usually enjoy a cup of tea at the same time.



The Ringers, top feeder anglers and hot tub aficionados.

Finally met up with the Ringers who just came back from their practice match, makes a nice change seeing them in person and not on the internet. A quick snapshot with the feeder world champions ought to get the lads back home green with envy ;) Yes, we were staying at the same place The Old Rectory Self Catering in Fenagh, nr.Ballinamore, Co.L Leitrim and it has a hot tub and sauna.

Opening night at the Standing Stone Hotel. Was greeted at Ryan and Tony Kersley at the door, they made me feel welcomed, then was called over by the reigning pairs champs Cathal & Jacko for a chat. All the big names and legends whom I till now only saw in mags and online were there!



The locals are friendly!

Cathal & Jacko, the men to beat!

Everyone was very friendly and shared useful tips and wished me luck but I politely reminded them not to put any money on me!



In the Who's Tallest Competition, Polly was rather excited to meet me!



Here I am with Colm Breheny, Lakelands & Inland Waterways, Fiona Beeby the very first lady entrant to the Pairs and Bob Nudd 4 x World Champion.

After receiving a surprise goodie bag of tourist information, a new cap and two bags of Pro-Natural from Bait-Tech who provided for every angler, it was time to be serious.



Drew rotation 5 so the first morning draw for Kevin & I will be at Ballinamore.



First day at the 'office'!

Day 1 and I drew Church on peg 11, Kevin dropped me off and I got set up straightaway. Had Dave Brettle on my left and Mike Kirby, another first timer to Ireland, on my right.

The starting whistle blew everyone got down to business. Everyone was on the tip and I caught some early hybrids. Didn't expect pike would heavily 'tax' your catches though! I stayed on the feeder throughout the match but things didn't quite go my way. Every time I turned to Dave and Mike they were reeling in fish!

After my first day of Irish match fishing it was evident there still was plenty for me to learn. Had a low 2.340kg, but it was a good experience and at least it wasn't the lowest weight in my section. Kevin went through some tactics with me later on the way back so had to remember a few things!



Regretting having my thermals on!

My Day 2 was on peg 11 at Airport. The way I would describe the day, it was hard & hot! I have a temperature sensor on my wristwatch and at midday it indicated 34 degrees Celsius! It's not unlike back home I tells ya! I actually had thermals on and I was baking inside! It was another tip only venue with plenty of perch, and weeds.

The 2012 Daiwa Cup winner Francis McGoldrick was joint winner at 6.100kg while I only weighed in at 2.100kg of small perch (and 10kg of weeds) on a really hard day.

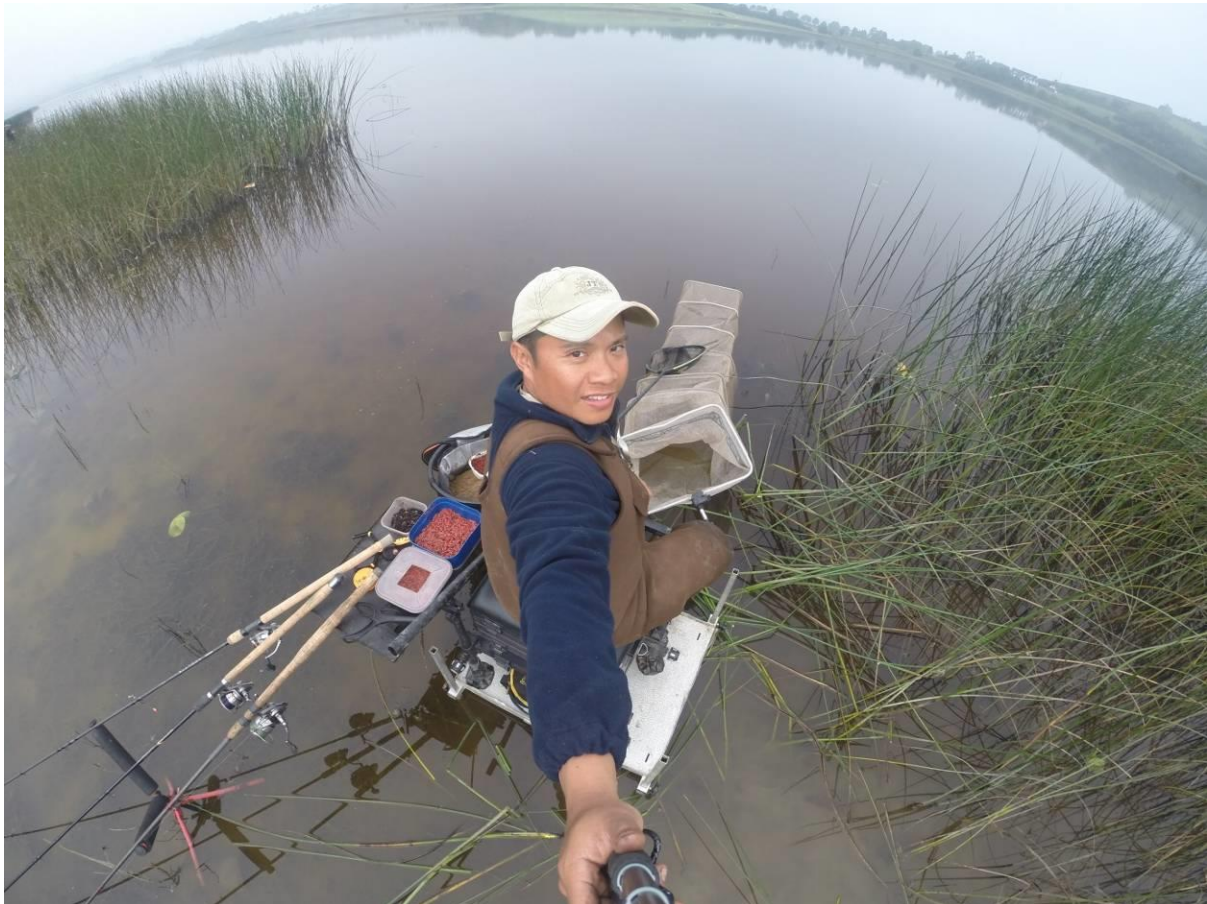
Kev had a tough day too. Steve and Kevin quickly pointed out some things I needed to sort out with my fishing, the tactics are worlds apart from Malaysia's.



Day 3 and I drew Peg 3 and Kiltybarden, handy cause I had a practise just at the next peg so was somewhat familiar with it. With '3 red maggots' and '50 turns' drilled into me head the night before, I was attacking my swim with plenty of feed on the tip and pole lines. I swapped between tip and pole to get the bites coming and caught some hybrids and skimmers.

Heard Killadeas was fishing hard and wondering how Kevin got on. Certainly felt a little bit more confident in this match and caught better than the first two days.

Guess I managed to repay some of Kevin's' and Steve's trust in me by weighing in at 6.860kg for a second in the section with Frances again coming up tops with 8.00kg. Went back to the cottage to some high fives from Steve and plenty of cheering in the pub that night!



Misty & muddy!

Day 4 Up on a cold, misty morning, I drew peg 1 at Ross Lough, the poor guys on the higher numbered pegs though had to lug it all the way to the peg through the mud. There was a small discussion going on as to how far anglers are allowed to wade out due to the mud and low water level. Can't believe how shallow it was!

Set up on the rushes and caught early hybrids on the tip. I thought the fishing was really good with some early hybrids, at least until all the mist cleared and the sun came out which made bites really hard to come by. The resident pikes were there and they were no help eating some of my precious catches.

The sun was out too and the old watch indicated 33 degrees Celsius. I'm getting a nice tan from all this fishing! At the end of the day I managed a measly 3.600kg and Carl at peg 2 weighed 3.800kg, guess not the best pegs on Ross. Still enjoying the fishing and the scenery with warm weather all around. and will be looking forward to section 4 tomorrow.



The last day of the Wacky Race!

Day 5 Final Day: 'The End of the Wacky Race!' as my mate Fergal puts it. Drawn peg 9 at Bunerky so Kev will fish Brackley. Kevin dropped me off at the gate, it was then I realised that we had to walk for miles to get to the pegs with our heavy kit! "Make small trips lad, otherwise it'll do you in. Good advice indeed and I reckon everyone made at least 3 trips to carry all our tackle to our pegs.

I clipped up for 50 turns on the tip and an 11m (plumbed and found an interesting drop off there) pole line just in case. From the starting whistle some small fish (very small) were landed, then realised I was probably fishing on a bed of zebra mussels when some came back on the hook. Made slightly longer casts at 55 turns to a clear patch and slightly deeper water. Occasionally made casts to 45 turns where I got most of my catch. Preserved feeding with the 55 turn line but that was when things started to get horribly wrong. For close to 3 hours I think pegs 7-10 did not get any bites so we ended up chatting (and moaning). Bites started again in the last hour and Dave (former King Of Clubs champ) immediately went on a catching streak while I just stared helplessly at my motionless tip. Somehow cracked my tip too (sorry Steve!!)

"Mama said there'll be days like this", at the weigh in I looked into my keepnet and went "c'mon there's got to be more in there!" So my last day ended with a measly 0.450kg and I wondered if I had finished last in the rankings. At least Kevin, who fared a lot better had a good laugh at my results.



Got a ride with Richie Hull & Adam Rooney for the closing presentation at the posh Sieve Russell hotel. Mingled with the other anglers and some were collecting their section money wins. I was then introduced to the sponsors by Kevin, Norma Herron of Lakelands & Inland Waterways, Paul McAleavey of DCAL Fisheries and Robin Morely of Daiwa Sports. It was also good to meet up with the other anglers again whom I had not met since opening night. Kevin made a great speech and Cathal spoke on behalf of the anglers. Had a nice chat with legends Darren Cox, Tommy Pickering & Bob Nudd!



Congrats to Adam Wakelin, winner of the 2014 Daiwa Cup & partner Rob Wootton, crowned as the new World Pairs Champions of 2014 with a combined weight of 160.630kgs. Well done to the other winners too! Kudos to the organising team especially to Helen who ran around like mad every day to make sure everything went as planned!

I don't think I did too bad for my first introduction to Ireland! Fair play to Kevin for being my partner as he could be a serious contender although as Kevin is also the match director we were unable to fish for any of the massive €15,000 sponsorship which amounts to the 1st and 2nd prizes in the Pairs.

For those not chasing the prestigious Pairs title now sought after worldwide the DAIWA Cup is great. The individual match runs inside the Pairs and allows the regular match angler to compete for cash prizes and the top ten get big vouchers to spend on tackle & accessories too. With section payouts every five pegs or so and a best by county section each day it means hundreds of envelopes full of cash are distributed. Even I nearly made it with a second in section to Francis McGoldrick at Kiltybarden!

As for my two modest goals; I didn't finish last and I didn't blank either so it was a success and I shall come back next time and do better having got lots of tips from some of the best match anglers in the world!



Thank you to Bait-Tech who sponsored me with my Ground Bait and other goodies all week - it certainly helped and I have managed to get some back home too.



What a brilliant week in Ireland! With surprisingly very good weather throughout (though not ideal for fishing), fishing in beautiful locations among new friends. Had my first taste as an 'international' match angler. Reached my goals of not blanking on any day and certainly did not finish last, hurrah!

I sincerely hope that more international anglers will take part in the coming years and the World Pairs will grow from strength to strength with solid support from sponsors and participation from all of the top anglers again.

I've certainly learnt loads, and identified areas that I need to improve on, which are very important, things that hopefully will turn me into a better angler and a better person. Against all odds I made it to Ireland and caught a few fish, travelling thousands and thousands of miles on limited budget and borrowed tackle but it was all worth it.



Can't thank Steve Lockett enough who made it all possible. He was my coach, chef, chauffeur, cameraman, caster turner and what else! And not to forget my partner Kevin Locke (who surprisingly liked my cooking) for his generosity and for sharing plenty of his Irish fishing tips.

The two most frequent questions I get asked in Ireland were "Are you enjoying it?" "I certainly am!" I'll reply, and " Will you be back?" " I certainly will!"

Till then, tight lines - Guv